

The Mystery of South Mountain.

Written for The Sunday Chat

By F. HARRY ANSPACHER.

(Continued from last Sunday's issue.)

On the same afternoon that Will went over to the mountain, our three worthies, Relsome, Kepler and Moore, returned from that place and went to an old deserted barn situated near the residence which it was their intention to enter and rob that night.

"Are all our things ready?" asked Moore, as the three of them were lounging around, waiting impatiently for the night-fall.

"Yes," answered Kepler, "our dark-lanterns, sandbags, revolvers—yes, all here. Now, who is going to stand guard outside tonight? I suppose this thing can't be settled unless we draw lots, and the one that is taken must do it without any question."

This was agreed to, and the lot fell to Moore, who tried to put as cheerful a face as he could on the matter. Then they talked over their plans until far into the night, and about half-past eleven started for the Fenton house.

When they arrived there, Moore took his station at the corner so as to be able to keep his eye on both streets.

Kepler and Relsome gently broke the glass of one of the cellar windows and then jumped down into the cellar. Here Relsome lit his dark-lantern, by the aid of which the stairs were seen in one corner of the place. In a barrel they found some old rags, which they wrapped around their shoes, and then started up the stairs. The picking of the lock at the head of the stairs occasioned a few minutes delay, and then both stepped into the hall.

"Now we have a cinch," whispered Relsome, "only, for God's sake, don't make a noise. The old man's room is the front one on the floor above. You wake him up with your revolver at his head and I'll attend to the booty. But," he added in an impressive whisper, "don't let that d—n popgun of yours go off!" With these words both ascended the stairs noiselessly.

"Now, throw the slide of the lantern a little so that we can find the room. There it is, with the door half open.

Here goes."

They moved forward, and as Kepler stood in the doorway he lifted his slide again to get an idea of the interior of the room. But, as it happened, the light fell full across Fenton's face. He awoke, and seeing two men standing in the doorway, jumped out of bed for his revolver.

With one noiseless leap Relsome was in the middle of the room, and before Fenton could reach his revolver, struck him a terrific blow with his sandbag. Fenton dodged, and instead of catching him on the head, the bag struck him on the shoulder and felled him heavily to the floor, partly stunned. His wife was awakened by the noise of his fall, and seeing what had happened, uttered a terrific scream.

"Guard the door and look out for the son, while I settle this woman."

And with that, Relsome sprang for the bed, and, tearing a strip from the sheet, gagged the woman.

While this was happening, the son and daughter, whose rooms were on the floor above, had been awakened. Both started dressing, but the girl was ready first. Thinking that perhaps her mother had a night-mare, which was a common occurrence with her, she started down stairs.

Kepler, standing at the door, heard her coming and raised his revolver. The girl, when she reached the bottom of the stairs, seeing a revolver pointed at her head, stood for a moment paralyzed, and then uttered a scream after scream. With a smothered oath, Kepler, forgetting all about Relsome's advice, took a short, quick aim at her heart and fired. The poor victim dropped without a murmur. When Relsome heard the shot, he bound and gagged the elder Fenton, seized the money box and ran out into the hall. "Come on, you d—n fool," he hissed in Kepler's ear. "Didn't I tell you not to shoot. We've got to make a break for it before that fool upstairs comes down on us. We don't want to commit a second murder."

Since secrecy was at an end, both started down stairs at a furious rate, closed the cellar door after them, and in half a minute were in the street. When they joined Moore, Relsome said: "I've got the plunder; all separate and meet at the cave on the mountain," and all three disappeared in the darkness.

When Will heard what had happened he asked, "Has anything been done towards finding the murderers? Have any clues been discovered?"

"No, not exactly, but most th' folks think it was done by that feller Relsome and his gang, a'though thar are some as think that it was done by the workmen in the electric plant. Searchin' parties war 'mediately organized an' th' city war surrounded by a body of sentinels, an' ev'ry man thet come in town they tote off to the lock-up, an' now they has th' finest lot o' hoboes up i' thet jail as yer ever laid eyes on. They called fer volunteers for the searchin' party an' are still callin' fer more. Mayor Warren offered five hundred dollars reward fer th' murderers, dead or 'live, an' Fenton offered another five hundred, so it's a cool thousand fer th' man as finds 'em."

Will jumped up and made a grasp for his gun.

"Gen'ral Jackson! I hope yer not goin' ter volunteer," ejaculated Marlen senior.

"Why not, dad? I want a little excitement before I go back to work, so good-bye; I'll be back as soon as I'm relieved," and he was gone.

The old man lit his pipe and said to his wife, "Maria, I never did see such a headstrong young feller as Will," and having safely rid himself of this astounding statement, he set to work perusing a paper from the week before.

Very early in the morning, our three burglars and marauders were assembled in their cave on the mountain.

"Well, pals, that was a pretty good night's work but for that little affair of

Kepler's. The people are wild, some think the deed was done by workmen on the plant, others think we did it, and I'm anxious to find out which side is right. If they ever lay hands on us, they'll lynch us on the first tree, so we had better lie low for a couple of weeks."

"D—n you, Kepler," growled Moore, "if it hadn't been for your blame foolishness, nobody would have thought anything of this affair. Why the devil did you shoot the girl?"

"I admit," said Kepler, "that it was a foolish thing to do, but when I saw that girl standing there yelling blue murder, I lost my head completely and fired."

"Now Moore, what do you think of this?" said Relsome, speaking in a joking way, "the people know pretty surely that we are the guilty three. They also know that the murder could have been committed by only one of us. Suppose we deliver Kepler up to justice, then they will let us go."

Kepler started and turned deadly pale. "I hope, for God's sake, that you don't intend to do that, Relsome!"

"You can't tell what we might do," put in Moore, in bad humor because of Kepler's foolish act.

"By God! I'll bet you don't!" exclaimed Kepler, jumping for his revolver.

"Here! here! old man; cool down; we're only joking," exclaimed Relsome. "All right, but kindly joke on some less serious subject."

Kepler's slumbers that night were of anything but a peaceful character. First he saw the young girl whom he had killed, writhing in her death agony, then her brother coming down stairs, seeing him standing there, raised his hand and fired—not a pistol, but a serpent about a foot long. Kepler felt the thing curling 'round his body and the cold sweat broke out all over him. Then there came a quick, sharp pain.

Each of the others in turn had exciting dreams which ended respectively in a quick, sharp pain.

The next morning a party of searchers, led by Will Marlen, entered the robbers' cave.

The sight that met their eyes was one that froze their blood.

There, on the ground lay Relsome and his pals, just as they had gone to sleep—dead!

Their bodies were stripped and examined, but no marks were found, nobody noticing a small, round hole on

each body, as if inflicted by a pin, and likewise no one noticing a little serpent about a foot long, which was lying in one corner of the cave.

EPILOGUE.

Years afterward, as I was wearily dragging myself up South Mountain, I came upon a large tomb-stone. Thinking it strange that anyone should have been buried in such an inappropriate place, and being endowed with a large bump of curiosity, I approached the stone and read the following legend:

To the Memory of

Edward Relsome, Howard Kepler and Thomas Moore,

Who Died Mysteriously on the — Day of September, 1885.

May They Rest in Peace.

Pushing on, I saw what looked to me to be a large hole in the rock, carefully boarded up, and on the door was painted in large black letters:

Stranger! In This Cave, They Died!
DO NOT ENTER!!

Now, I have often noticed that through life, whenever we are told not to do a thing, whether or not we had any desire to do it before the command, immediately after it, we set to work doing it, contrary to all orders. So it was with me at that moment; Having read the sign, I was seized with an overpowering curiosity to see what was inside the cave. I hunted vainly for some sort of door in the wood; as far as that was concerned, the words "Do Not Enter" were simply a waste of paint. Thereupon I broke one piece of the wood out and clambered into the cave. I found it pitch dark inside, and having with some difficulty obtained a piece of wood to serve as a torch, I took a careful survey of the interior of the cave. There was nothing very extraordinary about its appearance, and I confess I was about to think that I was a sorry fool to have wasted so much time over nothing, when I saw in one corner of the place a little serpent about a foot long. A cold shudder ran through me, but I approached the thing cautiously, and found, to my great relief, that it was dead. Not trusting to my eyesight, I gave the thing a poke with a stick, and immediately it crumbled to pieces. Suddenly it occurred to me that the way those three men had met their death was—but it is needless to say more.

[THE END.]

Back in the Fifties.

Reminiscences of the Days of Ohio and Mississippi River Floating Palaces.

By CAPT. W. F. LAMBDIN.

It is not uncommon to hear veteran steamboatmen refer with extravagant expressions to the old days when the "floating palaces" traversed the great Ohio and Mississippi rivers from Louisville to New Orleans. The younger generation, which has known nothing but the railway train, with all its luxuries, and the ocean steamship, listens politely and mentally comments that the "old man is in his dotage," or that he is forty years behind the times.

But these old river captains are not behind the times. They realize that their work has been supplanted by something better, and rejoice that they were among the pioneers of the present complete system which reduces distances to minimum and makes every man happier in that he is in closer communion with his brother.

Nowadays, when we look at the average Ohio river boat, it is difficult to believe that there once plied between Louisville and New Orleans a series of genuine floating palaces. But there are many old men in Paducah, wholly disinterested from a professional point of view, who can testify in one way and another that the tales of these old captains are not myths.

That greatly admired actor, William J. Florence, put forth a book shortly before his death which contained many stories of the elegance of the once-great ante bellum steamboats of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. The book was called "The Gentleman's Hand Book on Poker," and while the stories have a tendency to exploit the virtues of the old Mississippi river gamblers, who constantly traveled on these steamers, they are written with such evident sincerity that one becomes greatly absorbed in

them and finally comes to the conclusion that these gamblers were not such bad fellows after all, and that they had the manners of gentlemen, and also that the boats were just what they were said to be—the most luxurious vessels of their time.

Capt. Silas Miller, of Louisville, Ky., who is still living and a leading capitalist of that city, was the commander of the Robert J. Ward, and from time to time his old experiences and pleasant recollections have been recalled.

There are many old river men now living in Paducah who were familiarly acquainted with Captain Miller in his steamboating days. Many years ago Capt. Miller received a letter from Mr. B. Frank Moore, of Harrodsburg, Ky., including a bill of fare for Tuesday, May 3, 1853, on board the steamer Robert J. Ward, which, through the courtesy of Capt. Miller, has been reproduced, with sections of Mr. Moore's letter. In one section, referring to the trip up from New Orleans to Louisville with his wife, Mr. Moore noted some eventful scenes and occurrences—one in particular, in which he said: "Doubtless you will recall, when just above New Madrid, we encountered a most terrible storm, which, being in close proximity to that great earthquake region, produced the utmost consternation among the passengers, as well as crew. You and the pilot, also engineers, were the only ones who stood undismayed at your posts. Among the passengers were Mrs. Slocum, two daughters and son, of New Orleans, who were on their way to Europe, besides nearly two hundred others, going to Saratoga, Cape May, White Sulphur Springs and other summer resorts so largely patronized in

those days by wealthy Southerners, all of whom were nearly panic-stricken. But quiet was restored through the cool, remarkable courage of yourself, pilot and engineers.

"I also well remember the night we got on board. Seeing the Texas brilliantly lighted, and thinking it strange at that hour [3 a. m.] I asked you what it meant. You took my arm and marched me up, and there I saw an assemblage of all the most noted gamblers of the South and West—Tenbroeck, Price, McGrath, Bill Chestnut, Boynton, Cochran and a host of others. Cochran had just returned from California with \$500,000 in gold, and the others were following him to get a little of the 'pie,' in which they succeeded to the tune of many thousands of dollars. Boynton, the principal of the gang, was a partner of old Jack Chinn, the father of the present redoubtable 'Jack,' in a stable of race horses, among them the celebrated 'Lightning,' with which they were exceptionally successful. The bill of fare shows the first dinner we took on the Ward, and, being impressed

with its sumptuousness and elegance, I inclose it to you as a gentle reminder of what high living amounted to on your elegant steamer."

MENU.

DINNER.

On board of steamer Robert J. Ward, Tuesday,

May 3, 1853.

SUPPER.

ORRIS.

FISH.

Red Fish, baked; Oyster Sauce.

Sheepshead, boiled; Egg Sauce.

Broiled Trout.

CHICKEN.

Ham

Turkey Egg Sauce

Mutton Capers Sauce

ENTREES.

Roasted Chicken, Port Wine Sauce.

Knuckle of Veal, Harvey Sauce.

Pig's Head, Tomato Sauce.

Priced-up Calves Feet, Lemon Sauce.

Turkey Wings, Celery Sauce.

Breast of Veal, with Green Peas.

Oyster Pies.

Macaroni, a la Neapolitane.

Broiled Potatoes.

Stuffed Crabs.

ROAST.

Beef

Pork

Fig

Mutton Turkey Chickens

Veal Ducks

VEGETABLES OF THE SEASON

PASTRY AND DESSERT

Lemon Pies

Blackberry Pies

Plum Pies

Currant Pies

Cranberry Pies

Green Apple Pies

Pumpkin Pies

Gingerbread Tart

Damon Tart

Almond Custard.

FRUITS.

Oranges

Bananas

Apples

Plums

Raisins

Almonds

Pigs

English Walnuts

Claret and Sauterne Wines.

Coffee.

Here are some interesting facts

about a jury that sat in a case in

court here the past week. The

youngest man was 37, and the oldest

71. Their aggregate ages was 430

years. Six were Baptists, three Meth-

odists, two Presbyterians and one

Catholic. It is no wonder they could

not agree and had to be discharged.

KINGS OF THE TURF TO RACE FOR A FORTUNE.

Cresceus, The Abbott, Boralma, and Charley Herr to Contest for Biggest Sweepstakes Ever Offered, at Charter Oak Park, Hartford, in September.

